NUMB. XXV.

The GUARDIAN.

——Quis tam Lucili fautor inepte eſt,
Ut non hoc fateatur?—— Hor.

Thurſday, April 9. 1713.

THE prevailing Humour of crying up Authors that have writ in the Days of our Fore-fathers, and of paſſing ſlightly over the Merit of our Contemporaries, is a Grievance that Men of a free and unprejudiced Thought have complained of in all Ages in their Writings.

I went home laſt Night full of theſe Reflections from a Coffee-Houſe, where a great many excellent Writings were arraigned, and as many very indifferent ones applauded, more (as it ſeemed to me) upon the Account of their Date, than upon any intrinſick Value or Demerit. The Converſation ended with great Encomiums upon my Lord *Verulam*'s Hiſtory of *Henry* the VIIth. The Company were unanimous in their Approbation of it. I was too well acquainted with the Traditional Vogue of that Book throughout the whole Nation, to venture my Thoughts upon it. Neither would I now offer my Judgment upon that Work to the Publick, (ſo great a Veneration have I for the Memory of a Man, whoſe Writings are the Glory of our Nation) but that the Authority of ſo leading a Name may perpetuate a vicious Taſte amongſt us, and betray future Hiſtorians to copy after a Model, which I cannot help thinking far from compleat.

As to the Fidelity of the Hiſtory, I have nothing to ſay; to examine it impartially in that View would require much Pains and Leiſure: But as to the Compoſition of it, and ſometimes the Choice of Matter, I am apt to believe it will appear not a little faulty to an unprejudiced Reader. A compleat Hiſtorian ſhould be endowed with the eſſential Qualifications of a great Poet. His Stile muſt be majeſtick and grave, as well as ſimple and unaffected; his Narration ſhould be animated, ſhort and clear, and ſo as even to out-run the Impatience of the Reader, if poſſible. This can only be done by being very ſparing and choice in Words, by retrenching all cold and ſuperfluous Circumſtances in an Action, and by dwelling upon ſuch alone as are material, and fit to delight or inſtruct a ſerious Mind. This is what we find in the great Models of Antiquity, and in a more particular manner in *Livy*, whom it is impoſſible to read without the warmeſt Emotions.

But my Lord *Verulam*, on the contrary, is dry, in the tedious Stile of Declaimers, uſing two Words for one; ever endeavouring to be witty, and as fond of out-of-the-way Similies as ſome of our Play-Writers. He abounds in low Phraſes, beneath the Dignity of Hiſtory, and often condeſcends to little Conceits and Quibbles. His political Reflections are frequently falſe, almoſt every where trivial and puerile. His whole manner of turning his Thoughts is full of Affectation and Pedantry; and there appears throughout his whole Work more the Air of a recluſe Scholar, than of a Man verſed in the World.

After paſſing ſo free a Cenſure upon a Book which for theſe hundred Years and upwards has met with the moſt univerſal Approbation, I am obliged in my own Defence to tranſcribe ſome of the many Paſſages I formerly collected for the Uſe of my firſt Charge Sir *Marmaduke Lizard*. It would be endleſs ſhould I point out the frequent Tautologies and Circumlocutions that occur in every Page, which do (as it were) rarifie, inſtead of condenſing his Thoughts and Matter. It was, in all probability, his Application to the Law that gave him a Habit of being ſo wordy; of which I ſhall put down two or three Examples.

'That all Records, wherein there was any Me'mory or Mention of the King's Attainder, ſhould 'be defaced, cancelled, and taken off the File.—— 'Divers ſecret and nimble Scouts and Spies, *&c.* 'to learn, ſearch, and diſcover all the Circumſtan'ces and Particulars—— To aſſail, ſap, and work 'into the Conſtancy of Sir *Robert Clifford*.

I leave the following Paſſages to every one's Conſideration, without making any farther Remarks upon them.

'He

(Price Two Pence.)

'He ſhould be well enough able to ſcatter the 'Iriſh as a flight of Birds, and rattle away this 'Swarm of Bees with their King.——The Rebels 'took their way towards *York*, &c. but their Snow-'Ball did not gather as it went. ——So that (in a kind 'of Mattacina of Human Fortune) he turned a 'Broach that had worn a Crown; whereas For-'tune commonly doth not bring in a Comedy or 'Farce after a Tragedy.——The Queen was crown'd, '&c. about two Years after the Marriage, like an 'old Chriſtening that had ſtaid long for Godfathers. '——Deſirous to trouble the Waters in *Italy*, that 'he might fiſh the better, caſting the Net not out 'of St. *Peter*'s, but out of *Bergia*'s Bark. ——And 'therefore upon the firſt Grain of Incenſe, that was 'ſacrificed upon the Altar of Peace at *Bulloigne*, '*Perkin* was ſmoaked away.——This was the End 'of this little Cockatrice of a King, that was able 'to deſtroy thoſe that did not eſpy him firſt.——It 'was obſerved, that the great Tempeſts which drove '*Philip* into *England* blew down the *Golden Eagle* 'from the Spire of St. *Paul*'s; and in the Fall, it 'fell upon a Sign of the *Black Eagle* which was in '*Paul*'s Church-yard, in the place where the School-'houſe now ſtandeth, and battered it, and broke it 'down: Which was a ſtrange ſtooping of a Hawk 'upon a Fowl.——The King began to find where 'his Shoe did wring him ——In whoſe Boſom or 'Budget moſt of *Perkin*'s Secrets were laid up.—— 'One might know afar off where the Owl was by 'the Flight of Birds. —— Bold Men, and careleſs of 'Fame, and that took Toll of their Maſter's Griſt. '—— *Empſon* and *Dudley* would have cut another 'Chop out of him. —— *Peter Hialas*, ſome call him '*Elias*; ſurely he was the fore-runner of, &c.—— '*Lionel*, Biſhop of *Concordia*, was ſent as Nuncio, '&c. but notwithſtanding he had a good ominous 'Name to have made a Peace, nothing followed. '——Taxing him for a great Taxer of his People. '——Not by Proclamations, but by Court-Fames, 'which commonly Print better than Printed Pro-'clamations.—— Sir *Edward Poynings* was enforced 'to make a wild Chace upon the wild *Iriſh*.——In 'ſparing of Blood, by the bleeding of ſo much 'Treaſure. —— And although his own Caſe had both 'Steel and Parchment more than the other; that is 'to ſay, a Conqueſt in the Field, and an Act of Par-'liament ——That Pope knowing that King *Henry* 'the Sixth was reputed in the World abroad but for 'a ſimple Man, was afraid it would but diminiſh 'the Eſtimation of that kind of Honour, if there 'were not a diſtance kept between Innocents and 'Saints.

Not to trouble my Reader with any more Inſtances of the like Nature, I muſt obſerve, that the whole Work is ill conducted, and the Story of *Perkin Warbeck* (which ſhould have been only like an Epiſode in a Poem) is ſpun out to near a third part of the Book. The Character of *Henry* the Seventh, at the end, is rather an Abſtract of his Hiſtory than a Character. It is tedious, and diverſified with ſo many Particularities as confound the Reſemblance, and make it almoſt impoſſible for the Reader to form any diſtinct Idea of the Perſon. It is not thus the Ancients drew their Characters; but in a few juſt and bold Strokes gave you the diſtinguiſhing Fea-tures of the Mind (if I may be allowed the Meta-phor) in ſo diſtinct a manner, and in ſo ſtrong a Light, that you grew intimate with your Man im-mediately, and knew him from an hundred.

After all, it muſt be conſidered, in favour of my Lord *Verulam*, that he lived in an Age wherein chaſte and correct Writing was not in Faſhion, and when Pedantry was the Mode even at Court: So that it is no wonder if the prevalent Humour of the Times bore down his Genius, though ſuperior in force perhaps to any of our Countrymen that have either gone before or ſucceeded him.

This Paper is to be had of Mr. Yemes *under the* Thatch'd-houſe *Tavern in St.* James's-ſtreet; *Mrs.* Bond *at* Charing-croſs; *Mrs.* Bolter *near the* Temple-gate; *and Mr.* Round *in* Exchange-Ally.

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